

2019 ANNUAL REPORT



**SERVICE
WOMEN'S
ACTION
NETWORK**



YOUR VOICE, AMPLIFIED

INTRODUCTION

The Service Women's Action Network (SWAN) is the nation's leading nonprofit organization advocating on behalf of all service women and women veterans. We are a member-driven community network. Our actions are guided by the priorities of our members, regardless of rank and experience. We benefit from the involvement of general officers to junior enlisted, from those who retired 20 years ago, to those whose service to the United States is just beginning. SWAN is the voice of all military women—past, present, and future. We are the only national organization dedicated to active duty service women, Coast Guard and reserve women, and women veterans of all services.

SWAN was founded in 2007 by women veterans and over the past decade, SWAN has established itself as the leading U.S. organization advocating for equal opportunities, equal protections, and equal benefits within the military and the Veteran's Administration. We work hard to ensure military women get fair and equal treatment and care while in the military and when they leave military service. The founding of SWAN is rooted in the commonly shared experiences of many women in the military: an almost complete lack of recognition and awareness by civilians and members of the military alike that women serve their country alongside their male peers and that they have been impacted differently by their service. Because service women are frequently overlooked and often mistreated, many service women are reluctant to identify as veterans when they leave military service. This means that many women veterans do not seek Veterans Affairs (VA) services and benefits, which includes medical and mental health care. Since many services for veterans are administered through the VA, as the largest service provider to veterans, many women are not even aware of places to go to for help, assistance, or guidance after separating from the military. Additionally, this lack of recognition and awareness leads many women to feel especially isolated from their communities—both civilian and military—feeling unwelcome and misunderstood by both. This isolation and lack of community often leads to a range of negative impacts on their lives. To rectify the challenges that service women and women veterans face, SWAN builds up service women, educates policymakers, testifies before Congress, engages military and veteran leadership, works with the legal community, and informs the public. We provide expert research and analysis and help service women and women veterans advocate for their interests.

SWAN LEADERSHIP



Dr. Ellen Haring

In January 2020, SWAN's dedicated CEO, Dr. Ellen Haring, stepped down from her position in order to administer the Military Women's Coalition and to focus on her long-time passion: research. She will stay with the organization as a SWAN research fellow and Coalition administrator. She will continue to develop groundbreaking and impactful research with the SWAN team. Dr. Haring is a West Point graduate and a retired Army colonel. She is also a senior fellow at Women in International Security where she directs the Combat Integration Initiative. Haring's research and work focuses on women and gender in the military. She holds a PhD in Conflict Analysis and Resolution and she is an Adjunct Associate Professor at Georgetown University where she has taught courses on Human Security and Women, Peace and Security. SWAN is grateful that Ellen will continue working for the organization, and that she is able to continue her passion of compiling important research that will impact the lives of service women and women veterans.



Army Capt. Deshauna Barber

After a rigorous recruitment and vetting process, SWAN is excited to welcome a new CEO, Deshauna Barber, to the organization. Army

Captain Deshauna Barber is a top-rated speaker who is widely requested as a speaker at Fortune 500 companies. She was born in Columbus, Georgia, and is the daughter of two Soldiers. Serving in the military is a family tradition. In 2016, Deshauna was crowned the first Soldier to win the prestigious title of Miss USA. She spent her yearlong reign as Miss USA advocating for men and women in uniform and continues her work advocating for service members suffering from post-traumatic stress. She is dedicated to ensuring that service members and veterans receive the support and assistance that they need. She has a Bachelor's degree in Business Management from Virginia State University, a Master of Science in Computer Information Systems and Services from University of Maryland and she is currently pursuing a Diversity, Social Justice and Inclusion Certification at University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. SWAN looks forward to advancing our mission with Deshauna's leadership and dedication.

SERVICE WOMEN'S ACTION NETWORK



YOUR VOICE, AMPLIFIED

MISSION AND GOALS

SWAN's Mission: The mission of the Service Women's Action Network is to support, connect and advocate for service women-past, present and future.

In 2019, our work centered on four major goals, derived from the three focus areas outlined in our mission as well as our commitment to developing a well-sustained organization in order to maximize our impact.

Advocate: Advocate for the rights of service women and women veterans in order to create lasting, institutional change to create just military and veteran systems.

Connect: Connect service women, women veterans, and organizations focused on supporting military women to each other, creating a national network of military women.

Support: Directly support service women, women veterans, and their families by connecting them to direct services, information, and opportunities to support personal and professional goals.

Develop: Maintaining organizational sustainability, transparency, and growth so that SWAN can continue its mission, increase its impact, and promote more equal and just military and veteran systems.



Barksdale Women Fly for Women's History Month
by SrA Lillian Miller

SWAN 2019: BY THE NUMBERS

Today, there are **more than a quarter of a million women** in uniform and **over 2 million women veterans**; the highest number in history.

SWAN Members: 10,291

Case Management:

90+ service members and veterans were referred to direct service providers

3,000+ people accessed our online Resource Portal

Research and General Reports Published: 3

Report on SAS-137 Research Symposium on Integration of Women into Ground Combat Units

NDAAs 2020 House/Senate Comparison

Women in the Military: Where they Stand (10th Edition; 2019)

New Community Partners: 20+

New Community partners in 2019 included corporate and small business partners, charitable foundations, individual litigators who provided pro bono legal services to SWAN members, governmental organizations like the DC Mayors Office of Veteran Affairs, Veteran Service Organizations, and Military Women's Coalition members

RESEARCH

Women in the Military: Where They Stand (10th Edition, 2019)

In 2019, SWAN published the tenth edition of *Women in the Military: Where They Stand*. The booklet provides information, statistics, and status updates on women in the U.S. military. The booklet includes up to date data about the number of women serving in each branch, prominence of women in officer and enlisted positions and a historical background of women's involvement in the US military. Finally, *Women in the Military* provides background information on several key issues including Legal and Policy Changes, Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment, and Combat Integration. SWAN uses this data to educate policy makers, the public, and key stakeholders in advocating for service women and women veterans.



ADVOCATE

Ongoing Research: Longitudinal Study on Combat Integration and Female Trailblazers

SWAN continued to conduct its longitudinal research project that is following the integration of women into newly opened combat units and occupations. In 2019, SWAN staff conducted more than 20 interviews with service women in the infantry and armor occupations. The purpose of this research is to follow the first five years of women's integration into the ground combat occupations of the US Army so that we can identify and address the issues female trailblazers face in these newly opened positions. SWAN fellow Dr. Ellen Haring continues to share her knowledge related to combat integration at academic conferences and with key stakeholders, and in 2019 served as the technical evaluator for NATO at the Research Symposium on Integration of Women into Ground Combat Units.

LEGAL EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY



SWAN members participate in the Women's March in Washington, DC

SWAN uses its staff's expertise to educate policy makers and to advocate for legislation affecting service women and women veterans. SWAN ensures that information is easily accessible to the public so that the issues affecting service women and women veterans are understood.

Military Sexual Trauma, Sexual Assault, and Harassment

SWAN continues its important legislative and legal work on sexual harassment, bias, military sexual trauma (MST), retaliation against those who report MST and reproductive rights on behalf of servicewomen. We track all legislative and advocacy efforts including meetings with elected officials, Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense officials with statements written and sent to meet the needs of service women and women veterans.

As a member of The Military Coalition (TMC), in 2019 SWAN led the drive to convince the 30+ members of this coalition—a group consisting of the key military associations and veterans groups—to add "Prevention of Sexual Assault" to its key legislative goals in fiscal year 2020. This is the first time TMC has actively championed this cause.

Ensuring Just Integration of Women into Ground Combat Units

In 2019, SWAN continued its work with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) to ensure the fair and full integration of women into ground combat units and occupations. To this end, we amended our ongoing lawsuit now called *SWAN v. Esper* to emphasize the problems associated with the military's "Leader's First" policy." This policy limits the number of ground combat units to which active-duty and National Guard women can be assigned; it also inhibits the career progress of the junior women officers who are "the leaders" by making it necessary for them to remain in their current assignments instead of taking advantage of career-growth opportunities that their male peers have access to. Furthermore, the "Leaders First" policy means that in most states the National Guard cannot accept women enlistees in ground combat units since there are no women officers assigned to those units yet. The amended complaint also challenges the Marine Corps' practice of segregating men and women during basic training because it leads to unequal training expectations and devalues women Marines in the male recruit's view. In 2019, a judge in our case agreed and has refused to allow the case to be dismissed moving us to the discovery phase of the lawsuit. SWAN leadership is preparing for depositions and oral arguments.



2020 National Defense Authorization Act

SWAN noted two major victories from our legislative advocacy efforts in 2019.

- The National Defense Authorization Act 2020 ordered the USMC to integrate its recruit training facilities (boot camp) over the next few years. SWAN will continue to monitor the implementation of this change to ensure the integration is executed and completed.
- In 2018, SWAN published the report, “Access To Reproductive Health Care: The Experiences of Military Women.” This report included key findings and recommendations from SWAN’s comprehensive survey relative to three categories of reproductive care; access to birth control, infertility services and abortion care. In 2019, SWAN made over 30 visits to Congressional offices educating lawmakers on the needs of military women relative to reproductive care. SWAN also spoke at numerous military and veteran events providing the same research findings. Towards the end of 2019, SWAN’s advocacy related to service women’s reproductive healthcare proved fruitful with provisions that were added to the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act. The Act includes a requirement for the DoD to conduct research into women’s reproductive needs and to submit an annual report relating to the reproductive care of women in the armed forces, a new addition to the bill. This report is to include; statistics on diseases, disorders and conditions that affect the functioning of women’s reproductive systems, maternal mortality and severe morbidity, birth defects, developmental disorders, low birth weight, preterm births, reduced fertility and menstrual disorders.



SWAN Fellow Dr. Ellen Haring discussing how female veterans are affected by homelessness during an interview on Sirius XM.

PRESS

SWAN constantly highlights the contributions of military women in the media, shines light on issues affecting service women and women veterans and provides expertise on women in the military. We collaborate with major news outlets like The Hill, Politico, National Public Radio, Sirius XM, and more. In 2019:

- SWAN issued 6 press releases on the following:
 - The organization’s “friends of the court” legal brief in support of transgender service members
 - SWAN’s recognition as the Vetty Award winner
 - SWAN’s activity on Capitol Hill
 - The Pentagon’s annual report on sexual assault
 - SWAN’s support for legislation that advocates to remove military commanders from making decisions in felony cases
 - SWAN’s response to a report that addressed the gender gap at the Military Service Academies
- Appeared in over 30 interviews for various news outlets
- Published 2 original articles, one in Politico and one in The Hill.

CONNECT

MILITARY WOMEN'S COALITION

The Military Women's Coalition is a national group of formal and informal organizations that work collaboratively to serve and support active duty, reserve, guard, veteran and retired service women by uniting and elevating their voices to influence policy and improve their well being.

**MILITARY
WOMEN'S
COALITION**

UNITING SERVICEWOMEN:
PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

In 2018, SWAN researched and led the creation of the Military Women's Coalition. SWAN identified over 150 small, mostly unfunded organizations across the country that were serving military women at the local and state levels. In 2019, we have worked diligently to establish the Military Women's Coalition as an impactful and valuable Coalition for both member organizations and military women across the United States. In June 2019, SWAN hosted the first annual MWC Steering Committee meeting in Washington, DC. Through the establishment of the steering committee, the MWC has been able to focus its mission, create organizational bylaws and governing practices, establish avenues of funding for the MWC, and more. Though the MWC is a new organization, members have already seen the benefits of coalition membership in the ways of fundraising, resource allocation, connecting service women to relevant coalition organizations to assist them with the challenges they face and more. In 2019, SWAN played a major role not only in the Steering Committee and by the establishment of a basic organizational structure for the MWC but by planning, organizing, and hosting this conference. SWAN is the fiscal sponsor for the MWC.

SERVICE WOMEN SOCIALS

In 2019, SWAN held 3 Service Women Socials in Washington, DC. These socials served as an opportunity for service women and women veterans to meet each other, learn about resources available to them and strengthen a network of military women in the Washington, DC area.



SWAN 2019 SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

Facebook: 16,561

Instagram: 1,557

Twitter: 8,574

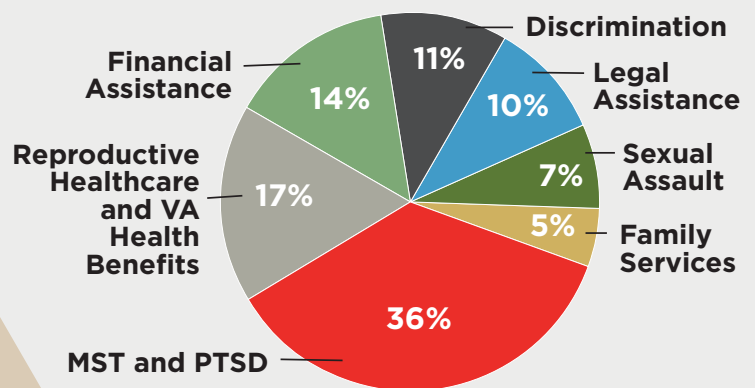


SUPPORT

CASE MANAGEMENT

In 2019, SWAN grew its case management program significantly. SWAN established the new position of case manager within the organization, meaning we now have a member of staff solely dedicated to responding to support requests from women veterans and service women and identifying gender specific resources in communities all over the United States.

SWAN responded to requests from veterans and service members related to a wide variety of issues in 2019:



SUPPORT CONTINUED

INTERNSHIPS

SWAN provides young professionals and students with paid internship opportunities, enabling them to gain professional development experience, the opportunity to learn about issues affecting service women and women veterans and the ability to give back to their communities. In recruitment, we give priority to candidates who have served, currently serve or come from military families.

Throughout 2019, SWAN had 6 interns:

- 2 were members of military families
- 3 were student veterans
- 5 were women

RESOURCE PORTAL

Since its creation in 2018, our Resource Portal is continuously expanding. In 2019, the SWAN Resource Portal grew to include more than 85 gender-specific resources and was accessed over 3,000 times. The Portal includes resources related to gender equality, housing, financial assistance, alternative therapies, mental health, and more.



SWAN Fellow Dr. Ellen Haring shares information with the public at a community event.

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS



Deployed Base Honors Women's History Month With Formation, Ceremony by Senior Airman Jenifer Calhoun

In order to work towards our mission for service women and women veterans, we depend entirely on the generosity of our members, community partners, and charitable foundations. In 2019, with the help of our supporters, SWAN has:

- Fought to ensure equal treatment of women in the military, hold sex offenders accountable in the military justice system, and eliminate barriers to disability claims for women veterans.
- Worked to expand and solidify the Military Women's Coalition, and to expand the efficacy of a national network of organizations and individuals focused on supporting service women and women veterans.
- Fought to ensure service women have access to all jobs, regardless of their gender.

SWAN remains focused and passionate in advancing our mission. In 2020, join us in supporting, connecting and advocating for service women-past, present and future.

To continue your support for service women, women veterans, and the Service Women's Action network, visit our website to become a SWAN member or to make a contribution in solidarity with all military women.

SWAN could not conduct research, educate policy makers, build networks among military women, or connect service women and women veterans to the resources they need without the support of our community.

THANK YOU for supporting the Service Women's Action Network!



Not Forgotten - Vietnam Women Veterans Visit Fort Lee by Dani Johnson

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